

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL DISTRICT COMMISSION  
INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP OF THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES OF JUNE 27, 2006**

Present: Chairman Jay Gregory, John Pesce, John Lynch, Stephen Coutu, Terrance Gray, Luis Torrado, Lori Capaldi, Jeanne Boyle and Heidi Green.

**1. Chairman's Remarks**

Chairman Jay Gregory called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Chairman Gregory explained that the Commission's consultants, Sam Shamoon and Glen Fontecchio (architectural consultants) and Maureen Chlebek of Gordon R. Archibald, Inc. (traffic consultant) were going to make recommendations as to the completeness of pre-application submitted for the East Pointe development by GeoNova Development Co. LLC.

**2. Continuing Business**

**a. Feedback from Consultants regarding the Pre-Application Submission of the East Pointe Development**

Mr. Shamoon indicated that he and Mr. Fontecchio had many questions concerning the plans submitted for the East Pointe Development. Mr. Fontecchio stated that his evaluation of the public realm indicated that there was no clear demarcation of public versus private space. Additionally, he raised concerns about the retention basins and the lack of detail as to how they would be integrated into the development to become amenities. Mr. Fontecchio further stated that the public walkway comprised of rip rap raised several concerns. One is that lack of landscaping and public amenities such as street furniture and pavilions to provide shade to pedestrians. He felt that on a hot day, the walkway would not be inviting to pedestrians because of the lack of shade. Mr. Fontecchio also pointed out that safety is also a factor. A better design may be to design a boardwalk over the rip rap.

Mr. Fontecchio stated that Area M the Village Green is not shown on the plans. He would like to see more details such as the uses of buildings that would be facing the green. It is shown that one side would have buildings with commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the second floor which would be acceptable. But if there were to be residential uses on the first floor, it would be best to have the first floor elevated to maintain privacy of the residents. Mr. Fontecchio further stated that the uses at the Point including the restaurant and marina may be odds with the residential component. It may be an opportunity for high density residential uses raised over the commercial uses so residents can look down on the activity.

Mr. Shamoon stated that it is unclear how GeoNova intends to subdivide the land and this should be clearly indicated in the proposal. Mr. Shamoon also indicated that there appears to be excessive parking in surface lots. He suggested that street parking be incorporated into the parking calculations to reduce the size of the parking lots. Mr. Shamoon stated that the plans called for parking on one side of Omega Drive and perhaps there should be parking on both sides. Additionally, Mr. Shamoon stated that it would be best to at least have sidewalks that are 6' to allow adequate space for trees and ADA compliance. Mr. Fontecchio added that he would like to see more green space adjacent to the parking lots for snow removal. Director Boyle suggested that perhaps the grassy area that could double up and be used as overflow parking similar to Ross Commons.

Mr. Shamoon indicated that Main Street offers an opportunity to be a gateway to the waterfront. As such, it would be best designed as a boulevard containing a median with plantings, wider sidewalks and signage. This could provide linkage from the existing neighborhood into the new community and waterfront. Mr. Fontecchio indicated that he would like to see a plan that consists of color coding indicating which spaces would be public and those that would be private, including treatments such as fences and walls. Mr. Fontecchio also pointed out that there was a pavilion depicted on the renderings but not contained on the plans.

Mr. Shamoon concluded by stating that the plans for East Pointe are very good, however, they can be improved by including more details pertaining to plantings, amenities, waterfront walkway and be pedestrian oriented. Mr. Shamoon also stated that there should be some consistency and collaboration with the Phillipsdale development so that there is flow from one development to another. Director Boyle suggested that there be a pedestrian plan to match up the connections to the neighborhood and bike path. It would also be beneficial to coordinate the grade, surfaces and materials between the East Pointe and Phillipsdale developments.

Mr. Torrado indicated that he did not like the repetition of design among the buildings. He stated that residents should be able to distinguish their building from the others. The buildings could be similar but contain distinguishing elements such as different windows. Additionally, Mr. Torrado indicated that there was not enough breakdown of the massing so that they are pedestrian oriented.

There was some discussion among the Commissioners and Attorney Engustian (attorney for GeoNova) about the townhouses in Phase I. Chairman Gregory commented that during the Workshop the architect indicated that the townhouses would contain in-law apartments which may affect the parking calculations. Attorney Engustian stated that the units would be connected and perhaps could be rented but she would seek clarification from the architect.

Chairman Gregory stated that pursuant to the Workshop conducted by GeoNova and the Informational meeting concerning the Phillipsdale project, developers were under the impression that the provision of 10% affordable units was a guideline rather than a

mandate. However, the 10% affordable housing requirement is a mandate and the alternative is for a developer to identify an off-site opportunity and contribute in-lieu fees.

Director Boyle indicated that she and Chairman Gregory had spoken to Attorney Main (counsel for the Waterfront Commission) who stated that pursuant to the Waterfront District Plan which is incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan certified by the state, requires developers to provide 10% affordable housing. There is no provision to provide less than the 10%. East Providence is one of the few communities in Rhode Island to exceed the 10% affordable housing requirement (East Providence is at 10.5%). As such, the Commission does not have the authority to require any less than the 10% affordable housing mandate. Director Boyle added that there is currently a bond issue before the General Assembly to assist developers with the affordable housing requirement.

Maureen Chlebek, an engineer with Gordon Archibald summarized the traffic study provided by Northeast Engineers and Consultants retained by GeoNova. She stated that they did well presenting the existing conditions, however, she had questions about the methodology pertaining to the trip generations. She stated that they broke down the mixed use site by use. She stated that the numbers used for the shopping center were underestimated and that based on the professional criteria used by traffic engineers, the applicant's engineer used the weighted method and it should be the regressional analysis method for this development.

She indicated the traffic consultant did not account for shared trips within the mixed use development or passersby who may pull in on their way somewhere else. Therefore, the mitigation measures presented by the applicant's consultant may not change if the regressional method is utilized however, the timing of the measures may be affected. Some measures may need to be implemented sooner than outlined using the weighted method. Ms. Chlebek also indicated that it would be beneficial to take the traffic study performed by Phillipsdale into account also.

Chairman Gregory suggested that the two traffic studies be combined. Pursuant to the Informational Meeting conducted last week, Phillipsdale will soon be submitting their application. Chairman Gregory also pointed out that during the meeting it was indicated that there is traffic back up on Broadway up to Massasoit in the mornings. Also the intersection of Wilson Avenue and Roger Williams should be included in the traffic study. Director Boyle indicated that the Commission can make the request to examine traffic conditions outside the Waterfront District however, there must be a nexus made between the proposed development and the impact to the suggested areas outside the Waterfront District. Director Boyle indicated that at the public hearing it would be prudent to possess that information since neighbors of the public will most likely ask about it.

Chairman Gregory also pointed out that at the Phillipsdale Informational meeting the public indicated that the width of Roger Williams was too narrow to allow parking and two cars traveling in opposite directions to pass. Director Boyle indicated that there needs to be more information provided regarding the layout of the left turning lane, ROW and signalization. She further stated that functionality of Bourne Avenue needs analysis. Ms. Chlebek indicated that the Commission may wish to see the widening of the street done earlier than indicated in the phasing plans. Director Boyle also stated that RIDOT and P & W Railroad should be given the plans to obtain their feedback on the proposed alterations. Ms. Chlebek added that details regarding the railroad crossing (bells or traffic calming measures) should be set forth.

Director Boyle indicated that the DRC needs to keep the process moving by providing comments as to the completeness of GeoNova's submission. She indicated that comments should be forwarded from the Commissioners, consultants and City departments concerning completeness. Additionally, comments from P & W Railroad and RIDOT should be collected. After two weeks, once the comments have been compiled they will be forwarded to GeoNova. Director Boyle indicated that the Commission may require more than 45 days to make its decision. Director Boyle indicated that it may not be possible to wait for the traffic study to be performed by Essex River's consultant for Phillipsdale prior to the decision being made on the East Pointe development. Chairman Gregory asked if Ms. Chlebek could estimate the impacts of Phillipsdale by running the model with 30% more traffic.

Director Boyle indicated that it is not clear pursuant to the plans who is going to pay for the improvements. She stated that there should be some coordination among the developers regarding scheduling and financial responsibility for the proposed improvements. RIDOT has many projects with limited resources however this may be an opportunity to implement Tax Increment Financing.

Motion to conclude the meeting made by Mr. Pesce and seconded by Mr. Lynch.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne M. Boyle  
Executive Director

JMB/hjg